

Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1 to 10 are cancelled and claims 11 to 20 are added as set forth hereinafter.

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

11. (New) A method for detecting the actuation of an operator-controlled element actuatable to assume different degrees of displacement, the method comprising the steps of:

5 realizing different operator-controlled functions of said operator-controlled element in dependence upon the degree of displacement of said operator-controlled element;

actuating said operator-controlled element against a spring force with two degrees of displacement being characterized by two different spring constants, respectively;

10 determining a quantity which characterizes the spring constant corresponding to the degree of displacement; and,

detecting at least one of said operator-controlled functions in dependence upon said quantity.

12. (New) The method of claim 11, comprising the further steps of:

detecting the degree of displacement of said operator-controlled element utilizing a sensor;

5 causing said sensor to generate a measurement signal in dependence upon said degree of displacement;

determining a time-dependent course of said measurement signal;

10 selecting a slope of said time-dependent course of said measurement signal as said quantity characterizing the spring constant; and,

detecting said at least one operator-controlled function in dependence upon the slope of said measurement signal.

13. (New) The method of claim 12, comprising the further step of detecting said at least one of said operator-controlled functions when the slope of said time-dependent course of said measurement signal lies in a pregiven region.

14. (New) The method of claim 13, wherein said pregiven region is defined by a threshold value.

15. (New) The method of claim 13, comprising the further step of selecting said pregiven region so that the time-dependent change of said measurement signal occurs only via an automatic reset of said operator-controlled element caused by an automatic
5 reduction of said spring force.

16. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein said automatic reset is achieved with an abrupt reduction of said spring force.

17. (New) The method of claim 16, wherein said abrupt reduction

of said spring force is effected by the spring constant assigned to the corresponding operator-controlled function.

18. (New) The method of claim 11, wherein said operator-controlled element is an accelerator pedal of a motor vehicle; said at least one operator-controlled function is a kick-down function or an escape-switch function to overcome an
5 activated speed limiting; and, at least one degree of displacement of said accelerator pedal in the vicinity of a stop is assigned to said at least one operator-controlled function.

19. (New) The method of claim 11, comprising the further step of detecting said at least one operator-controlled function only when said at least one operator-controlled function is detected several times within a pregiven time interval.

20. (New) An arrangement for detecting the actuation of an operator-controlled element actuatable to assume different degrees of displacement, the arrangement comprising:

means for realizing different operator-controlled functions
5 of said operator-controlled element in dependence upon the degree of displacement of said operator-controlled element;

means for actuating said operator-controlled element against a spring force with two degrees of displacement being characterized by two different spring constants, respectively;

10 means for determining a quantity which characterizes the spring constant corresponding to the degree of displacement; and,
means for detecting at least one of said operator-controlled

functions in dependence upon said quantity.